



THE CASITAS WATER NEWS

Customer Rate Increases Postponed Supreme Court Decision Requires Proposition 218 Procedures

Casitas' customers, excluding retail customers, will not see a water rate increase on their bills after September 1, 2006 as originally approved. Rate increases are delayed so that Casitas can adhere to a recent California Supreme Court ruling *Bighorn-Desert View Water Agency v. Verjil* that says public water agencies must abide by Proposition 218 requirements. This means all property owners must be notified about proposed "fees" or "charges." It also states that a public hearing must be held to receive any protest of proposed fees or charges and a majority protest by property owners will prevent the adoption of the proposal.

Casitas' proposed balanced budget with a 9.9 percent revenue enhancement that targets needed repairs throughout Casitas' water system, steelhead trout recovery and water conservation programs was approved at a public hearing held on Wednesday, July 12, 2006. The hearing was publicized through press releases to the media, Web site postings and mailings to customers. However, this new California Supreme Court decision requires that proposed water rate increases be done through the specific public hearing and protest procedures in Proposi-

Monthly Water Rate Comparisons for Local Water Agencies

Agency	¹ Residential Pump with 5/8" to 3/4" Meter	Residential Pump with 1" Meter	² Agricultural Pump with 2" Meter
Carpinteria	\$113.80	\$132.63	\$1,839.23
Montecito	\$96.28	\$114.47	\$1,566.77
City of Ventura (County)	\$62.08	\$70.145	N/A
Golden State Water Co.	\$47.27	\$83.90	\$2,060.68
City of Oxnard	\$46.39	\$51.23	N/A
Casitas (Proposed)	\$44.13	\$44.13	\$531.23
Casitas (Current)	\$42.02	\$42.02	\$478.71
Ventura River	\$36.75	\$46.03	\$519.33
Meiners Oaks	\$21.90	\$22.90	\$312.42

¹Avg. Casitas Monthly units used 19.88 for this customer group

²Avg. Casitas Monthly units used 911.03 for this customer group

tion 218. Casitas' Proposition 218 hearing has been scheduled for **Wednesday afternoon, November 8, 2006, at 3:00 p.m., in the Board of Directors' meeting room at Casitas' offices, 1055 Ventura Avenue, in Oak View.** The proposed additional revenue will pay for maintenance and repair of corroded water tanks to include painting and recoating that will prevent their costly replacement; repair and maintenance of filter vessels used in treating water to prolong their service life; repair and replacement of valves and pipes used to deliver water to customers; endangered steelhead trout recovery efforts mandated by federal law to include monitoring activities, repairs to the new fish passage facility, staffing of biologist and long-term recovery planning; and implementation of water conservation best management practices to help address long-term water supply and demand concerns.

"Proper planning is needed if we are to continue to reliably deliver high quality drinking water that is safe for our customers even during drought conditions," stated John Johnson, General Manager for Casitas. Several new large budgetary requirements have arisen during the last

few years such as storm damage repairs and steelhead trout recovery projects.

Questions and Answers About Your New Water Rates

How will Casitas' residential customers be affected? The water rates for an average household will increase by approximately \$2 per month or 5.2 percent. A typical family uses around 15,000 gallons of water each month—the same amount of water it takes to fill a swimming pool. Some non-residential customer groups will have water rate increases greater than residential rate increases. The average agricultural customer will have around a 10 percent increase in rates. Johnson explains, "We want to make sure all of our customers pay their fair share of water delivery costs. So, we proposed to raise rates more for those customers who were paying below the costs that it takes to deliver the water to them."

How do Casitas rates compare to other local agencies? Casitas' water rates rank near the bottom when compared to neighboring water agencies. The average Casitas residential customer will pay less for their water than residents in Santa Barbara, Montecito, Carpinteria, Ventura, Oxnard and most of Ojai that is not served by Casitas.

Fall 2006 at Lake Casitas Recreation Area

📅 September 23-24

The Pirate Faire & Fall Renaissance Festival. Fun for the entire family with pirate treasure games and entertainment.

📅 October 12-15

The Float Fly Invitational, sponsored by the Ventura County Comets Model Airplane Club

For more information visit our Web site www.lakecasitas.info

Agricultural Customers to Get Assistance



Orange Grove in the Ojai Valley.

Casitas Awarded Grant to Help Farmers Improve Irrigation

Farmers with low irrigation efficiency will soon be getting some extra help. Irrigation system improvements and evaluations are recognized as an important "Best Management Practice" in the Bureau of Reclamation's water conservation guidelines. Thus, the Bureau awarded Casitas a \$25,000 grant to help farmers improve their irrigation practices or systems.

The Agricultural Water Audit Program will offer distribution uniformity testing for Casitas' agricultural customers who have above average water usage per planted acre. Agricultural audits will identify any irregular watering that is occurring because of problems with a grower's irrigation system. Casitas' goal is to reduce water demand by 70 acre-feet for agricultural customers. At the end of the planned 35 individual water audits, a general summary of the results will be made public. This summary will also be distributed to all agricultural customers to help them better understand local agricultural watering efficiency issues.

Casitas proposes to work with the Irrigation Training and Research Center (ITRC) at the California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo. The ITRC's Summer Irrigation Evaluation Team offers an Agricultural Water Conservation program that will use students during the summer months to provide free cost-effective evaluations for our agricultural customers. The evaluation teams will visit farms throughout the Casitas district in a mobile lab. They will provide written reports to farmers regarding their distribution uniformity as well as a brief overall evaluation of the effectiveness of their irrigation systems.

Federal Government Proposes Future Plans for Casitas Recreation Area and Watershed

The United States Bureau of Reclamation is developing a new plan for the Lake Casitas Recreation Area and surrounding watershed. Three alternative plans were presented at a public meeting held at the Oak View Community Center on June 29 (please see the proposed plans outlined in the chart below).

Casitas hopes that any alternative plan

from the federal government will consider the importance of protecting Lake Casitas' water quality. Casitas' primary goal, in any future planning, is to protect the watershed area so water quality in Lake Casitas is not negatively impacted. This may mean limiting activity in the watershed area.

Casitas' *Continued on page 4* ➤

Federal Alternatives for Watershed/Open Space Area That Drains into Lake Casitas

Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
Relocate federal fire training and incident command post to watershed area.	Relocate federal fire training and incident command post to watershed area. Relocate a helicopter landing site on watershed.	Relocate federal fire training and incident command post to watershed area. Relocate a helicopter landing site on watershed.
Allow limited day use hiking, biking and/or horseback riding in watershed.	Allow limited day use hiking, biking and/or horseback riding in watershed accompanied by a guide.	Allow public access by permit to hike, bike and/or horseback ride in watershed.
	Allow for a nature interpretive center on watershed to possibly include raptor center, wildlife hospital and outdoor education.	Allow for a nature interpretive center on watershed to possibly include raptor center, wildlife hospital and outdoor education.
	Expand hiking trails to connect to adjoining trails in the Los Padres National Forest	Expand hiking trails to connect to adjoining trails in the Los Padres National Forest.
	Allow tent camping in watershed.	Allow tent camping with permit.

Federal Alternatives for Lake Casitas Recreation Area

Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
Maintain existing recreation activities.	Consider reduced speed limits for boating; relocate model plane airfield; expand water play area; establish bike paths; allow camping on island; and build an Environmental Information Center on the island. Allow boating on portions of the lake that are currently restricted.	Consider reduced speed limits for boating; relocate model plane airfield; expand water play area; establish bike paths; allow camping on island; and build an Environmental Information Center on the island. Allow boating on portions of the lake that are currently restricted.
Improve accessibility with ADA upgrades.	Modify/improve up to 20 percent of existing tent campsites to be compatible with RVs; relocate RV and boat storage area/landscape screening of parking and storage areas; improve boat ramps by extending ramps and reducing number of ramps.	Modify/improve up to 20 percent of existing tent campsites to be compatible with RVs; relocate RV and boat storage area/landscape screening of parking and storage areas; improve boat ramps by extending ramps and reducing number of ramps.
	Improve accessibility with ADA upgrades.	Improve accessibility with ADA upgrades.
		Allow windsurfing, water-skiing, swimming and personal watercraft.
		Allow camping on island and at southwest area of Lake Casitas.
		Build an amphitheater, expand special event area and modify up to 40 percent of existing tent campsites to be compatible with RVs.

WE WANT TO KNOW:

How do you feel about water conservation, your water and Casitas?

Complete Casitas' survey today for your chance to win Casitas' GREATEST WATER-FRIENDLY HOME MAKEOVER contest!

The winner will be rewarded with free water-conservation upgrades for the home. Water conservation device upgrades may include ultra low-flow toilets, an automatic weather-controlled landscape timer, faucet aerators and a landscape consultant review.

Winners will be randomly selected from all survey responses submitted by the **4:30 p.m. Monday, October 16 deadline**. Casitas Municipal Water District employees and their family members are not eligible to win. Property owners must agree to install all water-conservation devices provided to them to be eligible to receive the water-conservation devices. All devices provided by Casitas must be installed at the winner's place of residence. Water-conservation devices will only be provided to replace existing high-flow devices. The winner must agree to be photographed and interviewed for our newsletter, participate in a planned media event and cooperate with Casitas staff to coordinate equipment installation. Casitas reserves the right to cancel the program at anytime.

Please circle the best answer.

1. Which agency is your direct water provider?

- a. Casitas Municipal Water District
- b. City of Ventura
- c. Golden State Water Company
- d. Meiners Oaks County Water District
- e. Ventura River County Water District
- f. Other _____

f. Protection of steelhead trout	1	2	3	4	5
g. Attaining more water	1	2	3	4	5
h. Communication	1	2	3	4	5
i. Water taste	1	2	3	4	5

2. What do you believe should be Casitas' highest priority for the future?

- a. Develop additional water supplies
- b. Improve water quality
- c. Stabilize water rates
- d. Protect endangered species

3. How much more money are you willing to pay in addition to your regular water bill per month to:

- | | \$0 | \$1-5 | \$6-10 | \$11-15 | \$16-20 | \$21-30 | \$31-40 | \$40+ |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. Protect/enhance environment? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Increase water supply? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. Improve water quality? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

4. What water -conservation practices do you perform on a regular basis?

- | | Yes | No | Not Applicable |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. Only run full loads in dishwasher/ clothes washer | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b. Use broom to clean driveway/ sidewalk | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c. Avoid midday lawn watering | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d. Change lawn watering at least seasonally | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e. Use low-flow devices in home | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f. Repair leaks in a timely manner | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

5. On a scale of 5 to 1, with 5 being the most important and 1 being the least important, how would you rate the Casitas Municipal Water District on these issues?

- | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. Quality of water | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b. Cost of water | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| c. System reliability | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| d. Water pressure | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| e. Water conservation | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

6. (If applicable) On average, how many times per week do you water your outdoor areas? _____ What time of day do you water? _____ For how many minutes? _____

7. (If applicable) Compared to last year at this time, do you water your lawn/garden...

- a. More
- b. About the same
- c. Less
- d. Don't know

8. My effort toward water conservation in the home during the last year can be best described as:

- a. Increasing
- b. Staying the same
- c. Decreasing
- d. Not sure

Please provide your zip code to help us better understand your areas needs _____

Please fax completed survey to 805-649-3001 or mail survey to Ron Merckling (805-649-2251, ext. 118) at Casitas MWD, 1055 Ventura Avenue, Oak View, CA, 93022 by 4:30 p.m. Monday, October 16.

To enter Casitas' GREATEST WATER-FRIENDLY HOME MAKEOVER contest, please provide the following information:

Name (print) _____

Phone Number _____

Address _____

City _____

State and Zip _____

Federal Proposal

Continued from page 2

secondary goal is to continue to financially break even over the years in the Lake Casitas Recreation Area, which Casitas has done for the past 17 years.

“Only visitors to the Recreation Area pay for operations. Casitas’ water customers do not pay for the recreation operations,” said Casitas General Manager John Johnson.

The Lake Casitas Recreation Area is among the approximately 5 percent of all publicly run recreational operations in the country that maintain a positive cash flow. Casitas would like to limit any competing recreational activities in the watershed that might negatively impact Lake Casitas water quality and make it more difficult for the Lake Casitas Recreation Area to break even financially.

A Closer Look at Wise Water Use

Beauty and the Drought-Tolerant Garden

It may surprise you to know that many beautiful water-saving plants will grow in your garden. Our climate varies from warmer summers and colder winters in the Ojai Valley to the cooler marine influence along our coastal areas. No matter what region of the county you call home, there are plenty of lovely drought-resistant plants that will thrive in your yard.

Low-watering trees that will grow throughout our area include:

Locust – This is a fairly fast-growing tree that will reach 40-75 feet in height. It has clusters of sweet pea-like white or pink flowers in the spring.

Olive – This evergreen tree will grow to 25-30 feet tall. There are fruitless varieties such as “Swan Hill” if you wish to avoid the messy fruit crop.

Low-watering shrubs that will grow throughout the district include:

Cape Mallow – It’s an evergreen shrub that produces masses of pink or purple flowers. This plant will grow to six feet or more.

Wild Lilac – This evergreen shrub, small tree and ground cover will flower in the spring in white and shades of blue.

Lavender – Lavender is a traditional cottage garden plant. Its gray-green spikes of foliage and purple flowers provide color all year. Since the Middle Ages, the dried flowers have been one of the main ingredients of potpourri. Fresh sprigs are included in herbal bunches known as tussie mussies, which have been used for hundreds of years to mask unpleasant odors and ward off illness.



The Lion's Tail – This shrubby perennial will grow three to six feet tall. Its tubular orange flowers will show summer to fall. It is one of the most consistently colorful plants in the dry

garden. Lion's Tail will grow in full sun to dark shade. It will slowly spread by root suckers. It looks best if the dead flowers are trimmed, but this plant will still put out new growth and blooms without the extra grooming.

WATER CONSERVATION PROGRAM FOR RESTAURANTS AND FOOD SERVICE FACILITIES – FREE REPLACEMENT of High-flow pre-rinse kitchen spray valves for better performing efficient low-flow pre-rinse spray valves. This program is sponsored by the Southern California Gas Company as well as some participating water agencies and it offers both water & gas savings! Please hurry because it only runs through Dec 31, 2006 and supplies are limited. Call today at 1-800-423-9896.

See Details Inside on How to Enter Casitas’ Greatest Water-Friendly Home Makeover Contest!



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Oak View, CA 93022
805-649-2251
www.casitaswater.org

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Charles Bennett, Division IV
Russ Baggerly, Division V
John J. Johnson, General Manager

The Casitas Board of Directors is scheduled to meet at 3 p.m. in the board room located in the main office at 1055 Ventura Ave., Oak View, on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of every month.